

Subject: Migration and Maritime Powers Legislation Amendment (Resolving the Asylum Legacy Caseload) Bill 2014
Date: Sunday, 26 October 2014 3:10:48 PM

Dear Senators,

I do believe that all laws in Australia need to have some oversight by the Courts and that administrative and ministerial decisions need to be seen and understood by the public and have the prospect of review if incorrect decisions are made. The proposed bill seems to give the minister too much discretionary power. I think this is a bad thing.

Secondly, the 'threat' of large numbers of refugees is overblown. Look at Turkey and its acceptance of over a million refugees from Syria and similar numbers entering Jordan and Lebanon. Why is it that we are so concerned at the low numbers coming here ? I think it was always under 20,000 a year.

If we are really concerned about the safety of refugees on the high seas, then we should let them come by plane or license seaworthy craft to bring them here for assessment. Saving lives by turning them back is just a fiction. They are fleeing for their lives in the first place. They know the risks of drowning already.

Processing at sea seems to be a 'shallow' process. The department used to spend up to a year to do the necessary checks before accepting an asylum seeker's refugee status, now it claims it can do this in just minutes with a radio conversation. It cannot be a complete process and anyway it should be subject to review.

The asylum seeker assessment process for those that do come ashore takes too long and the conditions in the detention centres is too much like a prison. I have talked with people in the country who have had a detention centre in their town. Upon meeting the detainees, they regarded them as lovely people and were upset when ongoing contact with them was banned. Moving people off-shore is a way of hiding the extent of the abuse.

Temporary Protection Visas are no solution. It keeps the stress on people and they cannot settle down to continue their lives. In many country towns they would love to have refugee families and workers among them in the community. They cannot get workers for some jobs and the towns are depopulating.

Mental illness that develops among traumatised refugees becomes a burden on them and those set to watch over them. Is this what we want to tell the world about Australia ? That any refugees who get here will be driven mad or to suicide until they admit they would rather be persecuted or murdered in the original country ?

What happened to our signatures on international conventions on refugees and on the rights of children. No amount of weasel words will get around the big gap between our undertakings and our actions.

I would like to say in conclusion that we are spending too much money on

something that does not work and makes Australia an outcast. It makes us look mean.

Peter Flanagan